

Message Text

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ACTION CU-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 MMO-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 /048 W

----- 102430

R 191831Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6282

UNCLAS PARIS 33299

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL

SUBJ: FRANCO-AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION: A
PRIVATE FRENCH PROPOSAL FOR A LAFAYETTE DAY

1. A FRENCH-RUN AMERICAN FOUNDATION, THE FOUNDATION
MEMORIAL LAFAYETTE HAS PROPOSED A JOINT FRANCO-AMERIC-
AN LAFAYETTE DAY, TO BE CELEBRATED ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1976,
THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYE-
TTE. FOUNDATION OFFICIALS SEE THE DAY AS ONE OF
REMEMBRANCE OF THE FRENCH ROLE IN THE AMERICAN
REVOLUTIONARY WAR, AND A REAFFIRMATION OF THE TRADITIO-
NALLY CLOSE TIES BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.

2. THE FOUNDATION PLANS A NUMBER OF PROJECTS TO
PUBLICIZE THE DAY, INCLUDING, IF POSSIBLE:

(A) U.S. AND FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATIONS HONORING
LAFAYETTE;

(B) SIMULTANEOUS COMMEMORATIVE STAMP ISSUANCES;

(C) A HIGH LEVEL AND POPULAR CELEBRATION AT LAFAYETTE'S
BIRTHPLACE (OWNED BY THE FOUNDATION) IN CHAVANAC, NEAR
LE PUY IN CENTRAL FRANCE. THE EVENT WOULD INAUGURATE
A PROPOSED FRANCO-AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL
CENTER NOW IN THE FINANCING STAGE OF PLANNING. (PLANS
ARE TO INVITE PRESIDENT GISCARD AND AMBASSADOR RUSH).

(D) PATRONAGE OF LAFAYETTE DAY BY THE SENIOR SENATORS/
GOVERNORS OF THE 13 ORIGINAL STATES, WITH AN EVENTUAL
HONORARY ROLE IN THE FOUNDATION'S OPERATION OF ITS
CENTER.

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3. THE LAFAYETTE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION HAS REQUESTED U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING 1) THE PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION, 2) THE ISSUANCE OF A COMMEMORATIVE STAMP, AND 3) IN CONTACTING STATE OFFICIALS MENTIONED ABOVE.

4. THE FOUNDATION IS WELL KNOWN TO THE EMBASSY AND TO THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN LYON. IT WAS ORIGINALLY SET UP AS A DELAWARE NON-PROFIT CORPORATION AFTER WORLD WAR I TO OVERSEE THE RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF LAFAYETTE'S BIRTHPLACE, AND TO BE A REPOSITORY OF CERTAIN LAFAYETTE AND FRANCO-AMERICAN MEMORABILIA. THE FOUNDATION LATER ADDED, WITH FRENCH GOVERNMENT HELP, A CHILDREN'S QTE PREVENTORIUM ENDQTE. OVER THE YEARS, AMERICAN OFFICERS DIED OFF AND CHANGING MEDICAL CONDITIONS REMOVED THE NEED FOR THE MEDICAL CENTER, THUS LEAVING THE FOUNDATION WITH NO OBJECTIVE.

5. AFTER A PERIOD OF REFLECTION, THE REMAINING DIRECTORS AT THE FOUNDATION DECIDED TO RE-ESTABLISH ITS FRENCH-AMERICAN CHARACTER, TO ENLARGE THE GOVERNING BODY TO INCLUDE AMERICANS AND TO CREATE AN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL CENTER AT THE CHATEAU. THE PROPOSED LAFAYETTE DAY WOULD THUS BE NOT ONLY A ONE-TIME EFFORT, BUT THE HIGH-LEVEL INAUGURATION OF THE CENTER WOULD PROVIDE MOMENTUM FOR THE FOUNDATION DRIVE TO OBTAIN FUNDS AND THE INTEREST OF PROSPECTIVE USERS OF THE CENTER. (THE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER HAS SHOWN INTEREST IN THE CENTER ONCE IT IS IN OPERATION. THE INTERNATIONAL ROTARY CLUB IS ALREADY PROVIDING SOME FINANCIAL SUPPORT WITH PLANS TO DO MORE).

6. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE PROJECT TO BE WORTHY OF OFFICIAL SUPPORT. IT IS WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF THE BICENTENNIAL PROGRAM. IT HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF POSSIBLY GIVING BIRTH TO A PERMANENT FRENCH-AMERICAN COOPERATIVE EFFORT. THERE IS THE ADDED ADVANTAGE OF MINIMAL COST TO THE U. S. GOVERNMENT IN EITHER TIME OR MONEY.

7. THE EMBASSY REQUESTS THE DEPARTMENT TO MAKE INITIAL INQUIRIES WITH THOSE CONCERNED TO DETERMINE THE UNCLASSIFIED

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POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING THE REQUESTED PRESIDENTIAL LAFAYETTE DAY PROCLAMATION, THE COMMEMORATIVE STAMP ISSUE, AND THE PATRONAGE OF CONGRESSIONAL AND/OR STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MENTIONED ABOVE.
RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS, HOLIDAYS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PARIS33299
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750442-0653
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751223/aaaaaux.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION CU
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 MAR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 MAR 2003 by ReddocGW>; APPROVED <28 JAN 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRANCO-AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION: A PRIVATE FRENCH PROPOSAL FOR A LAFAYETTE DAY
TAGS: SCUL, FR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006